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Laboratory Studies of Solid Carbon Dioxide in Planetary and Interstellar Ices

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Abstract.

Laboratory spectra have shown that CO₂ is a powerful diagnostic tool for analyzing infrared data from remote observations, as it has been detected on icy moons in the outer solar system as well as dust grain surfaces in the interstellar medium. IR absorption profiles of CO₂ within ice mixtures containing H₂O and CH₃OH change with respect to temperature and mixture ratios. In this particular study, the CO₂ stretch mode around 2350cm⁻¹ (4.3 microns) is systematically observed in different mixtures with H₂O and CH₃OH in temperature ranges from 15 K to 150 K, as well as vibrational modes in the near-IR such as the combination bands near 3700 cm⁻¹ (2.7 microns) and 5080 cm⁻¹ (2.0 microns). Additionally, some high-temperature deposits (T > 50 K) of H₂O, CH₃OH, and CO₂ ice mixtures were performed to determine the maximum temperatures at which CO₂ will deposit on the sample window. These data may then be used to interpret spectra obtained from remote IR observations. This research was sponsored by Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) through the NASA Postdoctoral Program (NPP) as well as Ames Research Center and the SETI institute who provided facilities and equipment.

Plain-Language Abstract:

Carbon dioxide has characteristic infrared absorption features that change according to temperature and what other species are present within the ice. Reproducing ices in the laboratory allows us to observe specific conditions such as temperature and mixture ratios in a controlled environment.

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